

nearer to God, but without His written Word one could never learn about His character or about salvation.

The work of God's Spirit in providing written revelation and producing spiritual minds is expressed in 2 Timothy 3: "But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (vv. 14-17).

#### Prayer, providence and confidence

In denying claims by other churches of Spirit-gift possession, we should never give the impression that we do not believe in any form of miraculous guidance or healing today, nor in Divine miracles generally. We should hasten to affirm that we strongly believe in the power of prayer, and in the hand of providence. We pray for God's blessing on a meeting or for guidance in reading His Word. Such blessings or guidance are all part of Divine providence and the work of His all-pervading Spirit through angelic minis-

tration. But this is totally different from believing that the influence comes via ourselves as a possessed gift.

Being a small and close community we have the advantage of being quickly informed of sicknesses and problems in certain ecclesias, and combined prayers are always forthcoming when called for. In this respect we could easily claim to be a more effective praying community than many other churches, but we do not, and should not, glory unduly in this. When our members testify to having experienced providential happenings in their lives, we are most thankful and encouraged to hear of it. But we do not rely on, nor seek to promote, the spectacular.

Our faith requires no ecstatic claims of Divine wonders, which often prove to be exaggerated or totally false. Truth itself, springing from a love of God's Word, and combined with prayerful holiness, is sufficient to assure us what our duty should be: "It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD" (Lam. 3:26).

(Concluded)

Main external Sources: *What about Tongue Speaking?*, A. A Hoekema, and *Speaking in Tongues and about Tongues*, E. Mansell Pattison.



*Encounter*

*Reprinted items from earlier issues, chosen by the Publishing Editor*

## The Law given through Moses\*

### 18. The Day of Atonement

Islip Collyer

**I**N IMAGINATION based on Scripture we have conjured up the great Day of Atonement in ancient Israel—the tenth day of the seventh month, when a strict fast was commanded, a solemn affliction of soul in which all have to take part. Even strangers who happen to be in Israel at the time are required to conform. On this day the high priest will enter the most holy place, offering a perfect sacrifice for himself and for the people, and demonstrating

that the offering is accepted by the fact that he comes out alive.

Could there be anything else akin to this experience? Men often feel a nervous tension when they have to enter the presence of a human king. At such a time they would not forget any of the instruction they have received from courtiers. Yet with amazing perverseness they may be free

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from all such strain when they approach God. They are quite at ease so long as there is nothing seen or heard to arouse fear. They may address the Creator with thoughts only half in attendance and with a ready forgetfulness of heaven's etiquette. They even resent and resist the most reasonable claim that God will be honoured and sanctified in those who approach Him. It seems that only drastic judgements can teach men this elementary lesson. Aaron has suffered in this matter, through the death of his sons, and he will not forget.

IN imagination we may see the people at their best period, when the first severe lessons had taken effect, and for a little while—perhaps a few years—there was a readiness to obey.

The strict fast is being observed, and the people are assembled in orderly ranks with interest centred on the ceremony that means so much to them. With the exception of the chosen Levites who draw near to minister, the people are in the open field, looking at the white walls of the outer court but unable to see the preparations carried forward there. They can see the top of the tabernacle, for it is higher than the outer walls, but they cannot see the Levites at their work.

Everything that happens in the open is duly noted by those who are near enough to see, and the course of the ceremony is explained to the young people who are observing these things for the first time. A young bullock is brought near for a sin offering. Always a bullock is needed for the sins of the priest, and this, the great Day of Atonement, is for the sins of all, from the highest to the lowest. Then two young male goats are brought near, sturdy little creatures quite unaware of their destiny and paying no heed to the solemn ceremony enacted. Lots are to be cast for them, one for sacrifice and the other for freedom. This is the *azazel* or scapegoat. A strong man holds both kids on tough leather leads, and presently he will take the scapegoat far away into the wilderness.

A ram is brought near ready for the burnt offering. He is older than the kids and not so docile. He is a fine animal without any blemish. Wool, excellent for clothing, is on his body, and he is still young enough for his flesh to be good for food. No clothing will be made from his wool, however, and his flesh will only be food for fire. As with so many of these offerings, he will be a complete sacrifice, a burnt offering carrying the sweet savour of faith, obedience and surrender

of wealth in the consuming flame, pointing to the end of mortality and the destruction of the flesh.

Now men are bringing skin bottles of water and taking them into the court out of our sight. They are to fill the laver with pure water that the high priest may wash. He must wash his flesh in water and then put on the holy garments in readiness to enter the most holy place. Linen breeches, a linen coat, a linen girdle and a linen mitre on his head—thus attired in pure white he will be ready to approach the mercy seat.

The bullock is slain, causing some commotion that seems to be communicated to the crowd without, stretching in orderly ranks as far as the eye can see. The hum of conversation increases as explanations are given to the young, older members using their knowledge to follow the course of events. Then, suddenly, all sound ceases and there is a deathlike stillness. All the people are standing like statues, silent and immobile, for the supreme moment has arrived. No man must be in the tabernacle now. Even members of the priestly tribe whose duties take them there at other times must keep away on this Day of Atonement.

THE high priest takes his censer and, with fine incense in his hand, he passes between the five pillars which bear the needlework hanging at the door of the tabernacle. He goes straight to the cunningly woven veil which separates between the holy and the most holy. Fire is kindled at the altar of incense, and as he moves the veil aside he makes a cloud of incense to go up over ark and mercy seat. He comes back into the court and takes a basin of blood from the slain bullock. He sprinkles it with his finger on the mercy seat eastward and before the mercy seat seven times. He puts some of the blood on the horns of the altar to make atonement for Israel's transgression. He goes out again, and the kid on which the Lord's lot fell is killed. Its blood is dealt with as with that of the bullock.

The high priest then comes out into the court to send away the scapegoat. He lays his hand on the head of the animal and makes confession of Israel's sins. If there has been recently a national offence of outstanding evil, a tendency to rebel or to murmur, it must be mentioned. If faith has failed or they have lusted after forbidden things, confession must be made. Perhaps he ends by reciting a psalm. How appropriate would be that psalm of later days in which is stated the fact

which is symbolically exhibited in the ceremony of the scapegoat: "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us" (Ps. 103:12)!

The man with the scapegoat comes out of the court, the kid happily unconscious of the load of iniquity typically placed on its head. The people in solemn silence part to make a lane, and man and kid go far away until they are out of sight. The man may not return for many hours.

The high priest goes back into the tabernacle to change his garments, washing his flesh again during the process. Then he comes out to make the burnt offering of the ram. Some of the Levites remove the carcasses of the bullock and the kid, burning them according to the Law. Then those who have carried out this work must be the subjects of ceremonial washing. At last, after a journey of many miles, the man who took away the scapegoat returns, and the washing of his flesh is the last ceremonial act of the day.

IT is possible that some readers of ready sympathy with animals will think that there was cruelty in this ceremony of the scapegoat. They may have become reconciled to the slaying of animals in sacrifice. They may have come to recognise that, if domestic animals are kept and guarded against natural enemies, some of them must be slain by man, and it is better that blood should be shed in a solemn religious ceremony than in the callous pursuit of a lucrative trade. But what of this taking a young goat into the arid wilderness and leaving it there? Did not this involve unnecessary cruelty?

If any readers feel so, it is evident that they lack the knowledge which might have enabled them to see the significance of a young male goat being chosen for this lesson. Even sheep can live in a wilderness where larger animals would perish, but goats are still more adaptable and can live where sheep would fail to find sustenance. They prefer a mixed herbage and will sometimes leave good grass in favour of twigs to which sheep would only be driven by extreme hunger. Some owners of orchards have discov-

ered to their sorrow that, if goats are at liberty, even a plentiful supply of good grass will not make the bark of trees safe. Even the hard shrubs that grow in the wilderness will supply food for goats.

If the humane reader asks, "How would the goat get drink in the wilderness where no water was available?", the answer is that here again the male goat will thrive where other creatures would die. A century ago the country boys of Northamptonshire used to propound a riddle turning on the fact that a male goat could live all through the year without ever drinking. He is up in the morning for breakfast long before we are stirring. At such an hour there is plenty of dew on the slender twigs and he takes meat and drink at the same time. The scapegoat would thrive if the Law was properly observed.

IN some works of reference you may find it stated that the custom was to push the scapegoat over a cliff to kill it. There is not a shred of Scriptural justification for this practice, which certainly was cruel, probably maiming the animal without killing it outright. The custom arose from the fact that, on one occasion at least, the scapegoat found its way back to headquarters. This was regarded as such a bad omen that steps were taken to prevent its recurrence. Surely the national conscience must have been faultily tender for the people to suppose that all their sins were returned to them. Brother C. C. Walker, in *Witness for Christ*, suggests that the return of the scapegoat, if it meant anything, was an omen for good. The national sins had been taken away and life had returned to the people.

However we may regard this matter, it is obvious that the destruction of the scapegoat was contrary to the Law and it ruined the type. The great Day of Atonement symbolically presented the concepts of sacrifice, of cleansing, of forgiveness, of sins taken far away, and of life preserved. Perhaps there was something significant in the fact that the Jews observed the ceremonial sacrifice, cleansing and banishment of sin, but rejected the life.

**"Dare any of you . . . go to law?"**

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